



India's budget bets on infrastructure, manufacturing amid global trade war



# FM Sitharaman proposes major tax and customs duty changes, more high-speed trains

Defence push after Pakistan war and a dampener for stock markets

## Sitharaman said – capital expenditure target of 4.4%

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman addressed a press conference after the Budget 2026. During this, she said, "This budget gives a new direction to the goal of a developed India." She further stated that the country is moving steadily towards becoming a developed nation and that the government is moving ahead in promoting reform activities. The Finance Minister said at the press conference that this budget has been presented with the objective of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas (collective effort, inclusive development). She informed that special emphasis has been laid on growth in technological sectors in the budget. This is the first budget of the second quarter of the 21st century. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, "We are paving the way to energize and accelerate the economy so that the momentum of growth is maintained and sustainable economic development is ensured. Primarily, we are focusing on creating an ecosystem through structural reforms that will endure."



**New Delhi(GNS):** By identifying, exploring, and processing rare earth minerals domestically, India aims to reduce its dependence on external sources. The Budget also proposes the creation of dedicated rare earth corridors, enabling the country to meet its own material requirements and strengthen self-reliance in strategic sectors.

Union Budget 2026 Live News Updates: Nirmala Sitharaman proposed to reduce the tariff on all dutiable

goods imported for personal use from 20% to 10%, easing costs for individuals and encouraging personal imports. Sitharaman informed the House that the government has fulfilled its commitment made in 2021-22 to reduce the fiscal deficit below 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26. The fiscal deficit for RE 2025-26 is estimated at 4.4% of GDP, in line with the BE 2025-26 projection. For 2026-27, the fiscal deficit is expected to further decline to 4.3% of GDP.

## Budget 2026 reflects aspirations of 140 crore Indians: PM Modi



**New Delhi(GNS)** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday (February 1, 2026) said that the Budget 2026 captured the aspirations of 140 crore Indians, laying a strong foundation for their journey towards achieving a Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047. Mr. Modi congratulated

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for creating a new record by presenting the country's Budget for the ninth consecutive time. "It is a unique Budget, which focuses on reducing the fiscal deficit and controlling inflation, and at the same time harmonises high capital expenditure and high growth," he said.

## Rahul says – Youth are unemployed, manufacturing sector is declining

In the Lok Sabha, Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi said that the budget is unaware of India's real crises. He stated that youth are unemployed, the manufacturing sector is declining, investors are withdrawing capital, and domestic savings are falling sharply. Farmers are in crisis, and the threat of a global crisis looms – yet all these issues have been ignored.

**Khadge says – Modi government lacks political will:** Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said that the Modi government has run out of ideas. The budget does not address India's economic, social, or political challenges. It lacks a policy perspective and political will. There are not even slogans to cover up the absence of policy.

**West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee said:** "What he (the Finance Minister) said about the three corridors is a complete lie. These projects are already underway. We have started work on them. For the Jangalmahal Jungle Sundari project in Purulia, 72,000 crore will be invested in this economic corridor."

## At 104, Panjab University's oldest alumnus honoured

**New Delhi(GNS):** A delegation from the Panjab University Chandigarh Alumni Association on Saturday honoured 104-year-old Sahi Ram Bishnoi, the university's oldest living alumnus, at his residence in Sakta Khera village of Sirsa district.

The delegation travelled from Chandigarh to Sirsa to felicitate Bishnoi, marking the first time the university has honoured a former student at his home. University officials said the decision was taken in view of Bishnoi's advanced age and his significance to the institution.

Registrar Prof YP Verma, Alumni Association Dean Prof Latika Sharma, Prof Dinesh Bishnoi, Dr Jaidev Bishnoi and Prof Archana Chauhan presented Bishnoi with a bouquet, a shawl, a citation and a memento.

During the visit, members of the delegation spent time interacting with Bishnoi, who reminisced about his student days and his experiences during the Partition of 1947. He spoke about his education, public service and the hardships he faced during the Partition, which he believes contributed to his long life.

Prof Sharma said that one of Bishnoi's former classmates, aged 103, is still alive and currently resides in Pakistan.

According to Inderjit Bishnoi, secretary of the Bishnoi Sabha, Sahi Ram

Bishnoi is not only Panjab University's oldest surviving alumnus but also the oldest living former legislator of undivided Punjab. He began his law studies at Panjab

University in Lahore and completed his degree after the Partition at East Punjab University in Solan, which later became Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Family members, village residents and representatives of social, educational and legal organisations were present during the felicitation ceremony.

## Leaders from across parties invited for Halwara airport inauguration

**New Delhi(GNS):** Senior bureaucrats and other officials remained on their toes throughout Saturday to make last-minute arrangements for the Halwara airport inauguration programme, expected to be attended by close to 1,000 people from across the political spectrum tomorrow.

While the airport will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually from Jalandhar, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Union Minister for Civil Aviation Rammohan Naidu Kinjarapu will be at the airport along with other dignitaries to witness the ceremony.

The ceremony will be held around 4 pm.

According to an official, the "entire state machinery" was pressed into service to make last-minute arrangements for the event.

"A water-proof pandal is being set up for guests. The tomorrow's event is likely to be witnessed by 1,000 persons from all political parties. CM Mann has confirmed his visit to Halwara tomorrow ahead of the inauguration by the PM, which is expected to be around 3.30 pm to 4 pm", said the official.

The official said several Opposition leaders, including state Congress president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, have been invited for the event.

Industry hopes for financial package

Meanwhile, ahead of the PM's Punjab visit, local industrialists hoped for a central package to revive the industry in the state.

"If not tomorrow, then may be during the visit of Amit Shah in Punjab in February. We hope that a good package will be given to the industry in Punjab for revival," said Badish Jindal, president World MSME.

Expecting financial support for the MSMEs, the president of the ATIU, Pankaj Sharma, said, "Since the state polls are just a year away, industry hopes to get a good package."

Vikram Kanwar, a local resident, said they wanted the flights to start soon from the airport.

Commercial flights to begin from next month

According to sources, commercial flight operations were likely to commence at the airport from March, with formal announcements in this regard expected to be made by the Chief Minister tomorrow. Air India has reportedly received the necessary permissions from the Indian Air Force to begin operations from the airport.

Joint venture of airports authority, state govt Union Civil Aviation Minister Naidu said the Halwara terminal building had been developed as a joint venture between the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and the Punjab Government at a cost of Rs 54.67 crore. He said the operationalisation of the Halwara airport would significantly improve air connectivity in Punjab's Malwa region. "The airport will boost trade, industry, tourism, healthcare and education, and contribute meaningfully to the overall socio-economic development of Punjab," Naidu said.



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# Panic in the market after the budget

Sanat Jain

Gold, silver and stock markets fell from the sky to the ground

India's first budget was presented on a Sunday, February 1, 2026. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2026-27 in Parliament. The budget's primary goals are to boost economic growth, promote investment, simplify the tax system, and restore foreign investor confidence in the Indian economy. The government has increased capital expenditure. The budget aims to increase investment in domestic manufacturing and infrastructure projects, and promote job creation. The results are difficult to predict. Immediately after the budget was presented, the stock market expe-

rienced a panic. The Sensex and Nifty index fell sharply. The Sensex and Nifty indexes fell. The impact of higher derivative taxes and additional trading fees on some companies and investors has been felt in the stock market. The Union Budget has increased the prices of some commodities, including increased taxes and duties on raw materials like minerals and scrap. Taxes on liquor and futures trading have also been increased. The budget also provides for the reduction of prices of some essential medicines. The prices of medicines used to treat diseases like cancer and diabetes will be reduced, providing relief to the general public. Exemptions have been provided for the declaration of foreign assets and relief for undeclared assets,



along with exemptions from criminal cases and penalties. This could be a major step that will provide relief to the government treasury.

The government expects to receive substantial tax revenue from declaring foreign income and assets illegally accumulated by Indians abroad. Criminal cases will not be filed after declaring assets abroad. The Indian government has provided this new opportunity to declare foreign assets. Before assuming power in 2014, the Modi government had announced that it would bring back black money stashed abroad to India. This can be seen as an effort in that direction. There is a six-month special declaration scheme for income tax payers. If the declarant's foreign income/assets are up to ₹1 crore (approximately \$10 million), they can declare them in India by paying 30% tax plus an additional 30% (totaling 60%).

## Editorial

### Budget 2026: Balancing Growth, Discipline and Expectations

The Union Budget 2026 reflects a government confident in India's macroeconomic fundamentals and committed to a long-term vision of growth driven by investment rather than immediate populist relief. At its core, the Budget reinforces the belief that sustained public spending on infrastructure, manufacturing and strategic sectors is the most reliable path to economic expansion, job creation and global competitiveness. This approach signals continuity in policy thinking, where stability and predictability are prioritised over short-term political gains.

A defining feature of the Budget is its strong push towards capital expenditure. By continuing to invest heavily in roads, railways, logistics and urban infrastructure, the government aims to crowd in private investment and strengthen the foundations of the economy. Such spending not only boosts demand in the short run but also enhances productivity and efficiency in the long run. The emphasis on sectors such as manufacturing, technology and energy transition underlines an ambition to position India firmly within global value chains at a time of shifting international supply networks.

However, the Budget's cautious stance on tax relief and direct consumption support has drawn mixed reactions. Sections of the middle class and salaried taxpayers may feel overlooked, particularly amid rising living costs. The government's decision to avoid large tax cuts suggests a preference for fiscal prudence and consolidation, reflecting concerns about maintaining debt sustainability and investor confidence. While this restraint may be economically sound, it also places the burden of patience on households waiting for the indirect benefits of growth to materialise.

The Budget also attempts to strike a balance between growth and inclusion. Targeted support for agriculture, women, health and skill development indicates recognition of persistent social and regional disparities. Rather than broad-based subsidies, the focus is on more focused interventions, aiming to ensure that welfare spending is efficient and outcome-oriented. Whether these measures are sufficient to revive rural demand and address employment challenges remains an open question.

## Blood, fear and instability in the shadow of Bangladesh elections: a test of democracy or a repeat of history

**Bangladesh is once again at a juncture where elections, instead of being a celebration of democracy, are presenting a picture of fear, violence, and insecurity. The escalation of political violence in the country ahead of the general elections scheduled for February 12th has not only terrified ordinary citizens but also raised concerns across South Asia. The killing of 16 political activists in the past 48 days and the injury of 82 people in just 24 hours are enough to highlight how critical the situation has become. From the capital, Dhaka, to Mymensingh, Lalmonirhat, and Chuadanga, the flames of violence have spread, and the democratic process appears to be drenched in blood.**

### Kantilal Mandot

The elections were announced on December 11th, and tensions began to escalate from that day. According to human rights organizations, more than 62 election clashes have been reported across the country so far. The most frequent targets in these incidents have been workers of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Of the 16 people killed, 13 are said to be associated with the BNP. These figures are not just numbers, but a symbol of the terror being spread in the political arena before the elections. The opposition alleges that this violence is planned and aimed at influencing the election and intimidating voters.

The nature and methods of the violence are also concerning. According to local media, seven of the 16 political activists were shot dead. This clearly indicates the widespread presence of illegal weapons. Of the thousands of weapons looted during the July 2024 protests, a large number of weapons and ammunition have yet to be recovered. These very weapons are making electoral violence even more dangerous today. The question arises among the public: how can fair and peaceful elections be possible when the government is unable to control weapons?

In recent clashes, nearly 20 people were injured in violence between BNP supporters and rebel candidates in Mymensingh. At least 11 people were injured in a clash between BNP and Jamaat supporters in Lalmonirhat. Similar clashes occurred in the Alamdanga area of

Chuadanga, where more than nine people were injured. Most worryingly, violence is no longer confined to remote areas but has spread to the capital, Dhaka. The attack on NCP candidate Ariful Islam Adich in Dhaka proved that no one is safe.

The social impact of this political violence is profound. Elections are usually a time of debate, campaigning, and democratic competition, but in Bangladesh, it has become a time of fear and instability. People are hesitant to leave their homes, disrupting business and daily life. Minority communities have suffered the most. Earlier, incidents of targeting the Hindu community and their properties were reported, resulting in the deaths of many innocent people and the burning of their homes. Now, the election atmosphere is being further poisoned by the murder of political activists. This clearly shows that the scope of violence is continuously expanding, and no section of society is untouched.

The recent history of Bangladesh's politics is crucial to the backdrop of this crisis. In August 2014, under pressure from student protests, then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was forced to flee the country to India. Subsequently, an interim government was formed under the leadership of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, which promised to hold fair elections in the country. Hasina's party, the Awami League, was banned in May 2015, completely altering the political balance. This election, the first in Hasina's 15-year rule, is being held without her party in power and was

seen as a fair election. However, the current violence has cast doubt on this expectation.

The political equations are also complex. The BNP currently leads a coalition of 10 parties, while the Jamaat is contesting with a separate alliance of 11 parties. Parties such as the Islami Andolan Bangladesh and the Jatiya Party are also contesting the elections. With so many factions present, conflict was already expected, but the scale of the violence has taken everyone by surprise. The opposition is accusing the government of failing to maintain law and order and says the administration is remaining a mute spectator.

Experts fear a repeat of Bangladesh's electoral history, citing its bloodshed. The 1991 elections saw 49 deaths, followed by 21 in 2008 and 142 in 2014. The 2018 and 2023 elections were also marred by controversy and violence, with the opposition calling them one-sided. Given the current situation, concerns deepen about whether Bangladesh will be able to hold truly peaceful and fair elections this time.

Serious questions are also being raised about the law and order situation. Opposition parties say the police and administration are either under pressure or inactive. In many cases, the police have denied any conspiracy behind political killings, but the fear prevailing on the ground cannot be denied. When political activists are being killed openly and the culprits are not immediately prosecuted, it is natural for the public to lose faith in the law. This lack of trust further fuels vio-

lence.

Bangladesh's image is also at stake internationally. While the interim government wants to convey the message that the country is moving forward on a democratic path, the bloodshed on the streets undermines this claim. Tensions also persist regarding Sheikh Hasina, who lives in neighboring India. There are demands for her deportation, and the court's sentencing has heightened the issue. Despite this, the cessation of violence indicates that the problem is not limited to a single individual or party, but has taken the form of a deeper political and social crisis.

The biggest challenge facing Bangladesh today is how to keep elections free from violence. The true test of democracy lies not in simply conducting elections, but in ensuring that every citizen can exercise their right to vote without fear. If elections are held under the shadow of fear, their results will fail to win public confidence. The interim government, political parties, and civil society must collectively understand that violence is in no one's interest.

If the situation is not brought under control immediately, this violence will not be limited to the elections alone but could damage the country's stability and social fabric in the long run. Bangladesh is already grappling with economic challenges, unemployment, and social tensions. Political violence is adding fuel to the fire. Now is the time for all parties to show accountability, control weapons, punish the guilty, and make the elections a true festival of democracy.

## Justice Breaks the Silence: Menstrual Hygiene and the Constitutional Right to a Dignified Life

Sunil Kumar Mahala

Recently, the Honorable Supreme Court delivered a landmark judgment recognizing menstrual hygiene as an integral part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution, a commendable decision. The Court clearly stated that girls and women must have access to clean and safe facilities during menstruation to live a dignified life. Let me clarify for readers that Article 21 is a crucial article of the Indian Constitution, guaranteeing every individual the right to life and personal liberty. According to this article, a person cannot be deprived of their life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. This simply means that the state cannot arbitrarily interfere with any person's

life or liberty; it can only be done through a just and fair process under the law. It should also be noted that over time, the Supreme Court has broadened the interpretation of Article 21. Today, it is not limited to mere physical existence but also encompasses a dignified life. This includes rights such as the right to health, a clean environment, safe drinking water, education, privacy, livelihood (employment), housing, speedy justice, humane working conditions, women's safety, and menstrual hygiene. Thus, Article 21 forms the backbone of citizens' fundamental rights, or rather, the soul of the Indian Constitution, and provides a strong foundation for the protection of human dignity in a democratic system. In fact, with this very thought in mind, the Honorable Supreme Court recently



directed that free and easily available sanitary pads be made available to girl students in schools, so that their education and health are not affected by menstruation. It should also be noted that this decision was delivered by a bench of Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice R.

Mahadevan. The Court stated that lack of access to menstrual hygiene violates girls' right to dignity and privacy. This often leads to girls avoiding school, remaining absent, or dropping out altogether. The Honorable Court described education as a multiplier right, meaning a

right that paves the way for the realization of all other human rights. If education is disrupted, other rights are also undermined. National data on the state of toilets in Indian schools, with approximately 14.7 million, shows that approximately 96.8% of schools have toilets for girls (and 95.3% are functional) and 94.5% have toilets for boys (90.7% are functional), a positive sign compared to previous years, indicating improved coverage of basic sanitation facilities. However, other reports also reveal that approximately 67,000 schools, mostly government schools, lack functional toilets, leading to a persistent shortage of access to clean and safe toilets. Furthermore, only about 30-35% of schools have disabled-friendly toilets for students with special needs.

# CM inaugurates projects worth Rs 135 cr in Mehrauli

**New Delhi(GNS):** Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday inaugurated development projects worth over Rs 135 crore in the Mehrauli Assembly constituency, describing the initiative as a major step toward revitalising one of the Capital's most historically significant areas while strengthening basic civic infrastructure.

Addressing a public event in Mehrauli, the Chief Minister said the Delhi Government had ensured that no constituency faced a shortage of funds for development, enabling timely execution of projects across the city. The programme was attended by South Delhi MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Mehrauli MLA Gajender Yadav and a large number of local residents.

Gupta said the projects launched include reconstruction and repair of roads, renovation of dilapidated chaupals



and community buildings, construction of public toilets, beautification of parks, installation of children's swings and new open gym equipment for youth and senior citizens. These initiatives would ease traffic movement, improve safety in public spaces and enhance overall quality of life

for residents. Highlighting Mehrauli's cultural importance, the Chief Minister described it as a "living symbol of Delhi's ancient heritage," home to landmarks such as Maa Yogmaya Temple, gurdwaras, Iron Pillar and the Archaeological Park. She stressed that development in

the area must balance modern infrastructure with preservation of its historical legacy.

Gupta said approximately Rs 235 crore had been sanctioned for development works in Mehrauli, with multiple departments, including the Public Works Department, Irrigation and Flood Control Department, Delhi Jal Board and DUSIB working in coordination to implement projects.

She also outlined future priorities, including the proposed Badarpur-Mehrauli Elevated Road to ease congestion, construction of multi-level parking facilities, a 100-200 bed modern hospital, new sports grounds and additional community buildings.

The Chief Minister said these initiatives would not only upgrade civic amenities but also give a "fresh momentum" to Mehrauli's overall development while respecting its heritage.

# BJP MP Tiwari claims fake FB account using name, FIR filed

**New Delhi(GNS):**An FIR was registered on Thursday after North East Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari filed a police complaint alleging that an unknown person or group created and was operating a fake Facebook account using his name, photographs and videos to spread misleading and false content on social media and in society at large.

According to the FIR registered at the cyber police station, New Delhi district, a written representation was submitted by the BJP parliamentarian on Jan 22, requesting immediate action against the fake profile operating under the name, "Monoj Tiwari BJP".

Tiwari complained that the account had no connection with him and was being



operated without his permission. The FIR, registered on Jan 29, stated that the alleged impersonation amounted to unauthorised and improper use of Tiwari's identity and position as a public representative.

The complaint described the act as serious and objectionable, noting that such misuse had the potential to mislead the public and damage his reputation.

# Centre moves Delhi HC against order permitting posthumous reproduction

**New Delhi(GNS):**The Central government has moved the Delhi High Court challenging an order directing a private hospital to release frozen gametes of an unmarried deceased man to his parents.

A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia issued notice to the parents on Centre's appeal assailing the 2024 verdict of a single judge which held that there was no prohibition against posthumous reproduction if the consent of the sperm or egg owner could be demonstrated. In its order passed on January 29, the bench listed the appeal for hearing on February 27.

During the hearing, the Centre's counsel said the single judge's decision was in the teeth of the existing law on assisted reproduction and surrogacy.

She said the law did not provide for grandparents to become



the "intending" couple for the purpose of IVF and surrogacy, which was being permitted by the single judge.

On the court's query, the counsel also informed that the deceased's frozen gamete were yet to be released to his parents in spite of the single judge's direction and a consequent contempt plea by the parents was also pending in the high court.

The high court also asked the Centre to explain the delay of over a year in filing the appeal.

# Court junks passport forgery case against nurse deported from Belgium

**New Delhi(GNS):** Pointing to glaring holes in the prosecution case, a court has discharged a Kerala-based nurse from a decade-old cheating and passport forgery case linked to her deportation from Brussels in 2015. The court held that the prosecution failed to prove that she had cheated the Indian immigration authorities, as alleged by Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO).

Noting that there was "no sufficient ground" to proceed against the accused, additional sessions judge Pranav Joshi discharged Leena Maria Soosai from offences under various IPC provisions, including cheating and forgery, as well as for allegedly "holding forged passport" under Passport Act.



The multiple lapses in the investigation flagged by the court included "lack of proper chain of custody", "absence of original documents" and "concealment on the part of the prosecution". The case appeared to have been built solely on unverified allegations raised by the Belgian immigration authorities, the judge said.

In Dec 2015, Soosai had travelled from New Delhi to Brussels and was deported the next day after the Belgian authorities had

allegedly detected tampering in her passport. The defence, led by advocate Manoj Taneja, submitted that while her original passport was retained, no FIR was registered at the time and she was allowed to return to Kerala.

An FIR was registered on only eight months later in 2016, at the instance of FRRO, at the IGI Airport police station. Soosai was granted anticipatory bail the same year and the chargesheet was filed on July 12, 2022.

Despite allegations of cheating, the court noted that the Indian authorities had flagged "nothing suspicious" at her departure from New Delhi and that the case was initiated only after her deportation. Since the alleged offence was

detected abroad, the prosecution was also required to establish that the offence was committed in India under Section 188 of CrPC, but the investigation was noted to be "completely silent on this aspect".

The court noted that the Belgian authorities could not be examined due to immunity under Vienna Convention.

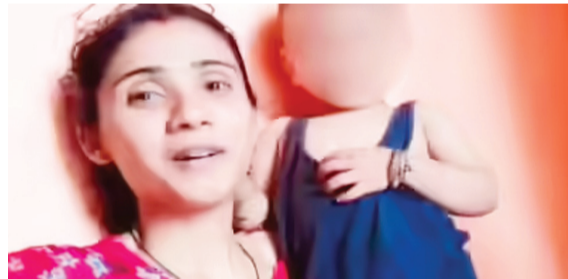
The court also pointed to the absence of any record indicating when the passport was sent by the Belgian authorities or received by FRRO. It also noted that one letter showed the accused's name had been "inserted manually" while the rest of the contents were typed, and that the original document was never produced before the court. The judge observed that a "special report" referred to in FRRO correspondence was never placed on record.

# A hole Delhi can't fill: How uncovered drain in Ghazipur killed a young mother and toddler - and official apathy still rules the spot

**New Delhi(GNS):** Tanuja, a 23-year-old homemaker, and her three-year-old son, Priyansh, were going to a weekly market on July 31, 2024, when they fell into a partially constructed drain in east Delhi's Ghazipur. Both died. The tragedy left her husband, Govind Singh Bisht, traumatised and he left Delhi for his ancestral place in Uttarakhand.

The drain was neither covered nor marked with any warning sign in 2024. One and a half years later, on visiting the site on Jan 23, and again on Jan 31, media found it still uncovered. Bisht, who earlier worked in a laboratory, said there was nothing left for him in Delhi after losing his entire family to negligence. "I lost my wife and only son. So I returned to my ancestral place. Here, I do petty work and am planning to open a small shop," he added.

At the time of the incident, the



family was living in Khoda Colony in Ghaziabad. They had shifted from Uttarakhand four years ago in pursuit of better employment opportunities. Eyewitnesses had claimed that waterlogging made it difficult for anyone to notice the uncovered drain, 15-foot deep and six-foot wide, near the CNG pump in Ghazipur paper market. They fell into the drain around 7.30pm and residents managed to retrieve the bodies around 11.30pm.

Bisht said the tragedy could have been avoided if the drain was covered or if warning signage was installed.

"My wife had just become an aunt and was going to the market to buy gifts for the newborn as well as some household items. There was waterlogging everywhere, making it impossible to spot the drain, and they fell into it."

Bisht had received Rs 20 lakh as compensation. He, however, stressed that it was the authority's responsibility to ensure public safety. "I only want the authorities to address such negligence so that no one else has to suffer the way I am suffering," he emphasised.

Narender, a relative, said his wife and child were accompanying Tanuja and Priyansh to the market. "My daughter was with them. Her slipper came off, so she went back to pick it up, and that's when the incident happened." He said his wife had jumped into the drain to save Tanuja and Priyansh, but was pulled out by bystanders and saved.

# No pollution hotspots in NDMC zone, shows report; major tech upgrade under way

**New Delhi(GNS):**An Action Taken Report by New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) says its jurisdiction has no identified air pollution hotspots, a status officials attribute to sustained upgrades in technology, strict enforcement and aggressive greening - measures that the civic body says will continue to be expanded.

The report, dated Jan 22 and prepared by NDMC's air pollution nodal office, notes that the council area, covering major arterial roads, diplomatic enclaves and commercial hubs, has benefited from continuous dust control, smoother traffic flow and close monitoring of pollution-generating activities. Anti-smog guns, mechanised sweepers, misting systems, electric vehicles and large-scale plantation drives together form what officials describe as a multi-layered,

round-the-clock clean-air strategy.

NDMC currently operates four mechanical sweepers in two shifts, covering 220-230 km daily, against a total mechanised sweeping length of 415 km. Collected silt is sent to the Okhla waste plant for scientific processing. To augment capacity, tenders have been awarded for five CNG-operated sweepers worth Rs 3.7 crore, expected to be operational by Feb. Proposals for four battery-operated lane sweepers and four ride-on sweepers for footpaths and parking areas are at an advanced stage.

Anti-smog guns are another key component. NDMC operates nine units - one static and eight mobile - with mobile guns covering up to 340 km daily. Static systems are installed at 10 private high-rises and three NDMC buildings.

# Bishnoi gang claims responsibility for attack on ISI henchman Shahzad Bhatti in Portugal

**'Lawrence bhai ke khilaf bolega uski sas band'**

**New Delhi(GNS):** In an attempt to demonstrate their global reach and resolve, the Lawrence Bishnoi syndicate has claimed responsibility for a high-stakes operation targeting ISI henchman Shahzad Bhatti in Portugal. It is unclear if Bhatti, a Karachi-based gangster-turned terrorist, survived the assault. The local police there is yet to issue a statement.

Bhatti is identified as a Pakistan-based underworld figure who operates a sophisticated criminal network with deep ties to state intelligence



agencies. He is described as a key proxy for the ISI, tasked with orchestrating cross-border terror modules and

recruiting Indian youth through social media platforms to carry out high-profile strikes.

His operations have been linked to significant security incidents, including a hand grenade attack on the Gurdaspur City Police Station and various plots targeting high-risk individuals across India. Beyond terrorism, Bhatti is alleged to command an extensive smuggling syndicate involving arms and narcotics, using his international reach to challenge rival factions like the Bishnoi gang.

Bhatti also appears in local YouTube videos and acts as a social media influencer to tap Indian youths to work for him. Recently, Delhi Police had arrested three of his shooters from Delhi, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh.

This module was involved in last year's grenade attack outside a police station in Punjab's Gurdaspur, which was carried out on Bhatti's instructions. Bhatti has been coordinating operations from Pakistan using encrypted platforms and social media channels, the Delhi Police had said in a statement.

Interestingly, Bhatti had even tried to tap Bishnoi and

released a morphed video of them having a conversation over a video call after he failed, said a source. The latest attack, claimed by Bishnoi's high-ranking associates Randeep Malik and USA-based Anil Pandit, on social media intended to serve as a formidable warning to those they perceive as adversaries.

"This strike reinforces the group's standing as a force that operates without geographical limits, asserting that no distance is too great when it comes to defending the honor of their incarcerated chief, Lawrence Bishnoi," said a source.

## Depression Detectable In Voice: AIIMS Researchers

**New Delhi(GNS):** The way a person speaks - from tone and fluency to emotional colouring and vocal effort - may offer early clues to depression, according to research underway at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi.

According to researchers, speech analysis could become an objective assistive tool to flag depressive symptoms early, especially in community settings with limited access to mental health care.

At an advanced Speech Health Lab set up at AIIMS Delhi with CSR support, researchers analysed speech samples from 423 participants with complete clinical and demographic records. The mean participant age was about 24 years, with most between 18 and 25. Nearly two-thirds were under 23 and about 75% under 25, showing stronger engagement among



younger users with low-barrier, speech-based mental health platforms. While ages ranged from adolescence to older adulthood, participation declined steadily after the mid-30s.

Standard psychiatric screening showed that around 32% had clinically meaningful depressive symptoms. When matched with automated speech analysis, prediction accuracy ranged between 60% and 75%, rising to nearly 78% when longer samples were

assessed.

The lab studies linguistic features such as fluency and articulation, along with paralinguistic markers, including tone, pitch, emotional resonance and vocal energy.

Researchers found depression often alters speech-reducing fluency, flattening prosody and lowering vocal effort - and stress that these models are intended to support early screening and referral, not replace clinical diagnosis.

"Analysis of speech offers a promising way to objectively identify signs of depression, as the cognitive and behavioural changes linked to the condition influence both the production and quality of speech. Patients with depression often show reduced fluency, diminished prosody or monotonous speech," said Dr Nand Kumar, professor, department of psychiatry, AIIMS Delhi.

Amid rising concern over depression, which affects over 264 million people globally, India's National Mental Health Survey 2015 found one in 20 experience depressive disorders, with suicide a major risk. Early detection is critical: a study by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences of 8,542 college students across 15 cities found one-third had moderate to severe symptoms, and nearly one in five reported suicidal thoughts.

## Don't create atmosphere of fear around exams, PM tells parents

**New Delhi(GNS):** With the ninth edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha approaching, the BJP's IT Cell on Saturday released a video of Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacting with students and offering guidance to parents and teachers ahead of board examinations. The clip was shared on X by Amit Malviya, In-charge of the BJP's National Information & Technology Department, with the caption "Prime Minister's message to teachers and parents."

In the video, PM Modi is heard advising parents not to create an atmosphere of fear or pressure around exams. "I would definitely tell parents - do not create tension about Classes X and XII, do not impose a curfew at home. Let children study in a happy and relaxed atmosphere," he



says. Emphasising the importance of a positive home environment, he adds, "Whether there are exams or not, efforts should be made to keep the home cheerful."

Addressing teachers, the Prime Minister stressed the need for empathy in education. "A good teacher is one who understands the student's pace, comes down to their level to communicate and then introduces academic subjects accordingly.

## Interstate psychotropic drug racket unearthed, 3 nabbed

**New Delhi(GNS):**The Delhi Police Crime Branch has busted a major interstate psychotropic drug racket with the arrest of three persons and seizure of 31 kg of Alprazolam (psychotropic drug), approximately three lakh tablets, officials said on Saturday.

The police also recovered illegal manufacturing and packaging material, indicating a large-scale illicit pharmaceutical operation.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of ER-II, Crime Branch, conducted a targeted surveillance operation to dismantle a network involved in the trafficking of psychotropic substances across the National Capital Region (NCR).

During the operation, the police arrested two accused, identified as Shamim (29) of Budaun and Rajeev Sharma (53) of Bulandshahar, Uttar Pradesh, near the Nand Nagri Bus Depot while they were travelling in a car bearing registration number UP-



13-CF-7336.

During the search of the vehicle, the police recovered 31-kg Alprazolam tablets, which fall under commercial quantity as per the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. The commercial quantity threshold for Alprazolam is 100 grams. The police also seized 11 kg of aluminium foil rolls printed with "Alprazolam", 25 kg of PVC sheet rolls used for tablet packaging, 20 rubber stamps bearing batch numbers and expiry dates and the car used in the crime.

## From ruins to reading: Structure in Mehrauli gets a new lease of life with books and games

**New Delhi(GNS):**An unnamed monument, next to Chaumukha Darwaza in the Mehrauli Archaeological Park (MAP), which has forever stood without any historical identification, is now drawing visitors because DDA has made a reading room there.

The once dilapidated and now restored structure is open to all for free and houses a modest, yet engaging, collection of books and board games like chess and carrom. The effort is aimed at encouraging families to spend more time at heritage sites. "The idea of restoring the ruins was to give them a fresh lease of life and ensure their public use," an official said. "Restoration began over a year ago and included providing the site a red sandstone floor, a



repair of the walls and staircases using the original material."

Restoration and conservation of the remaining portion of the structure - including the roof that had completely collapsed - is under way by following heritage norms.

A temporary roof of red sandstone slabs and beams is being constructed that

does not impose any structural load on the existing monument.

"While Chaumukha Darwaza falls under the jurisdiction of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the adjoining, lesser-known structure is being restored by DDA," an official said. "The project involves multi-agency coordination, the use of tradi-

tional restoration techniques, and improvements to visitor infrastructure."

Beyond monument-specific restoration, DDA has done largescale development work in the surrounding area, including desilting of waterbodies, the creation of pedestrian pathways, constructing sidewalks with small fountains, landscaping and the removal of encroachments. These efforts are being undertaken in coordination with other agencies to enhance the visitor experience while preserving the historical character of the park.

To begin with, DDA developed a large lawn in front of the reading corner building, where visitors were seen basking in the sun when media visited the site on Tuesday.

## Union Budget will strengthen 'Viksit Bharat' vision: Rekha

**New Delhi(GNS):** Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday expressed confidence that the upcoming Union Budget 2026-27 will significantly strengthen the vision of Viksit Bharat and accelerate India's march towards becoming a self-reliant and globally competitive nation by 2047.

Gupta said the Budget, to be presented under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, would be a key step towards the country's economic and social empowerment. She said its provisions were also likely to have a positive impact on Delhi's development trajectory.

The Chief Minister said the Centre, under



Modi's leadership, had consistently prioritised infrastructure development and technological advancement, which she described as crucial pillars for making India a

leading global economy. Gupta noted that the Central Government was already extending support to several key projects in Delhi, including initiatives related to

cleaning the Yamuna and constructing sewage treatment plants. She also highlighted continued financial participation of the Centre in the expansion of the Delhi Metro network. She further pointed out that Central schemes promoting solar energy, particularly the PM Surya Ghar: Free Electricity Scheme, were being effectively implemented in Delhi, contributing to clean energy adoption, reduced power costs and environmental sustainability in the Capital.

Emphasising Centre-Delhi cooperation, the Chief Minister said the partnership on Delhi Metro projects had strengthened the city's modern transport infrastructure.

## Delhi Aerocity Metro station to be developed as key interchange hub

**New Delhi(GNS):**The Delhi Aerocity Metro station on the Airport Express Line is set to be developed as a major interchange hub of the Delhi Metro network, with enhanced connectivity under Phase-4 of the Metro expansion project, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said on Saturday.

The station is being expanded to integrate with the upcoming Tughlakabad-Aerocity Golden Line corridor. Recently, the government approved a 2.263-km extension of this corridor from Aerocity to Terminal 1 of Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport.

DMRC officials said, in future, Delhi Aerocity could become a triple interchange station, as the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) plans to provide interchange facilities here for its proposed corridor to Alwar. Necessary structural provisions are being incorporated in the design to enable seamless future inte-



gration. The new Aerocity station will offer platform-to-platform connectivity on one side, along with concourse-to-concourse paid-area access between the Airport Express Line and the Golden Line. The new platform will be constructed at a depth of around 22 m.

The Golden Line station at Aerocity will be approximately 290-m, longer than the usual 260-m length of most interchange stations, to accommodate passenger movement and interchange requirements.

## Phase-IV: Aerocity metro station on track to becoming another key interchange hub

**New Delhi(GNS):** The city's metro map is about to get a new pivot point. Delhi Aerocity station on Airport Express Line is on track to become one of the most significant interchange hubs in the city's expanding public transport network.

As part of Phase IV of Delhi Metro, Aerocity is being transformed to connect with Tughlaqabad-Aerocity Golden Line, significantly improving the east-south connectivity and bringing large parts of south Delhi closer to the airport than ever before. Officials said the expansion would turn Aerocity into a crucial node linking long-dis-



tance airport travel with daily city commuting.

The importance of the sta-

tion grew further with the recent approval for extending Golden Line from Aerocity to

Terminal 1 IGI Airport station, covering a distance of 2.3km. Once operational, commuters from neighbourhoods such as Tughlaqabad, Ambedkar Nagar and Khanpur will be able to reach Terminal 1 directly by the metro, without multiple interchanges or road travel.

Designed as a high-capacity interchange, the station will offer both platform-to-platform connectivity on one side and concourse-to-concourse paid-area access between Airport Express Line and Silver Line. The underground platforms will be located at a depth of around 22 metres while the Golden

Line station itself will stretch to nearly 290 metres - significantly longer than a typical interchange station - to handle the expected passenger load.

What makes Aerocity even more future-ready is its planned role as a potential triple interchange. Structural provisions are being built into the station to integrate a proposed National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) corridor to Alwar. As per the alignment, Golden Line and the NCRTC corridor will cross diagonally and a space for future platforms will be embedded during the current

construction.

For air travellers, the changes promise smoother journeys. Passengers arriving at or departing from Terminal 1D will be able to switch to Airport Express Line at Aerocity via Golden Line while south Delhi residents will gain faster access to all terminals of Indira Gandhi International Airport.

With Phase IV steadily reshaping Delhi's transit landscape, Aerocity is poised to evolve from an airport station into one of the metro network's most strategic interchange hubs, stitching together the city, region and the airport like never before.